

Message Text

SECRET

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APPROVED BY MR TARNOFF

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 013708

NODIS

FOR AMB EILTS

FOLLOWING REPEAT SECTO 01009 ACTION WHITE HOUSE SECSTATE JAN
17.

QUOTE S E C R E T SECTO 1009

NODIS

WHITE HOUSE FOR THE PRESIDENT AND DR. BREZINSKI ONLY

DEPARTMENT FOR S/S-TARNOFF

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: OVIP (VANCE, CYRUS)

SUBJECT: SECRETARY'S MEETING WITH PRIME MINISTER BEGIN--
JANUARY 16

1. WE ARRIVED IN ISRAEL TONIGHT AGAINST THE BACKGROUND OF
REPORTS OF A DEEPLY DISTURBED PRIME MINISTER BEGIN. HE HAD
BEEN STUNG BY SADAT'S RECENT INTERVIEW IN A CAIRO MAGAZINE IN
WHICH SADAT SEEMED TO MAKE PERSONALLY CRITICAL COMMENTS ABOUT
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HIM AND SAID THAT THERE HAD BEEN NO RESPONSE FROM BEGIN TO
HIS INITIATIVE. HE WAS UPSET BY THE EXCHANGES WITH US ON PAST
ISRAELI COMMITMENTS ABOUT ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS IN OCCUPIED
TERRITORY, AS WELL AS BY WHAT HE BELIEVED TO BE SOME BACKING
AWAY FROM THE DEGREE OF SUPPORT HE BELIEVED HE HAD RECEIVED
IN WASHINGTON FOR HIS PROPOSALS ON THE SINAI (INCLUDING THE
SINAI SETTLEMENTS) AND THE WEST BANK. HE HAS SUFFERED THE

CRITICISM OF SOME OF HIS OLDEST POLITICAL COLLABORATORS
AND MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE
ARRIVED HERE YESTERDAY SAYING THAT ISRAEL HAD NOT
ADEQUATELY RESPONDED TO SADAT'S INITIATIVE.

2. I MET PRIVATELY WITH BEGIN FOR 15 MINUTES AND
ALLOWED HIM TO GET SOME OF THESE CONCERNS OFF HIS CHEST
IMMEDIATELY. I DELIVERED YOUR LETTER, AND HE WAS DEEPLY
MOVED. HE LEFT OUR PRIVATE MEETING TO DESCRIBE THE
LETTER IN GLOWING TERMS TO DAYAN, AND AFTER DAYAN HAD READ
THE LETTER HE FULLY AGREED. OUR SLIGHTLY LARGER MEETING
WITH DAYAN AND A FEW OF BEGIN'S IMMEDIATE ADVISORS BEGAN
IN A MOST CORDIAL, IF MODERATELY SOMBER, ATMOSPHERE.

3. BEGIN OPENED THE LARGER MEETING, AFTER HIS USUAL CORDIAL
GREETING, BY READING THROUGH THE RECORD OF WHAT HAD BEEN
SAID TO HIM ABOUT HIS BROADER PROPOSALS IN THE SINAI
WHEN HE WAS IN WASHINGTON. IT WAS CLEARLY A MATTER OF DEEP
PERSONAL CONCERN TO HIM BECAUSE I BELIEVE HE LEFT WASHINGTON
HONESTLY CONVINCED THAT HE HAD AT LEAST GENERAL SUPPORT FROM
YOU AND FROM THOSE MEMBERS OF THE SENATE WITH WHOM HE HAD
SPOKEN. HE MAINTAINED THAT HE DELIBERATELY AVOIDED TELLING
ANYONE THAT HE HAD AMERICAN "ENDORSEMENT" FOR HIS PROPOSALS,
BUT HE FELT THAT THE GENERALLY POSITIVE RESPONSE CONSTITUTED,
AS HE PUT IT, "A FORM OF ENDORSEMENT." I BELIEVE HE FELT
THAT THERE HAD BEEN SOME QUESTIONS RAISED ABOUT THE
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INTEGRITY OF HIS HADN'LING HIS UNDERSTANDING OF THE
AMERICAN POSITION AND HE HAD ALSO BEEN HURT BY THE
IMPRESSION OF ISRAELI INTRANSIGENCE THAT HAD BEEN
CREATED BY THE APPEARANCE THAT THE U.S. WAS BACKING
AWAY FROM HIS PROPOSALS. HE ASKED THAT I MAKE CLEAR
TO THE EGYPTIANS THAT THE U.S. IS NOT CHANGING ITS POSITION
ON THE ISRAELI PROPOSALS AS A FAIR BASIS FOR NEGOTIATIONS
AND AS "VERY REASONABLE." IF WE DID NOT DO AS HE ASKS, HE FEELS
THE EGYPTIANS WOULD BE ENCOURAGED TO EXPECT HEAVY
AMERICAN PRESSURE ON ISRAEL.

4. I PROMISED TO TELL THE EGYPTIANS AGAIN THAT WE FEEL
BEGIN'S PROPOSALS ARE A FAIR BASIS FOR NEGOTIATION. I
ALSO SAID, HOWEVER, THAT I WANTED TO BE ABSOLUTELY
CLEAR THAT, ON THE QUESTION OF SETTLEMENTS, WE DO
DISAGREE WITH THE ISRAELI POSITION AND HOLD THE VIEW
THAT THE SETTLEMENTS ARE NOT LEGAL. I THEREFORE HELD
THE LINE AGAINST PROMISING BEGIN WE WOULD DESCRIBE HIS
PROPOSALS TO THE EGYPTIANS AS "REASONABLE."

5. ON THE QUESTION OF SETTLEMENTS, HE WAS SILENT FOR A PERIOD,
SHRUGGED HIS SHOULDERS, AND SAID, "I MUST SAY THERE IS SOME

SADNESS ABOUT THIS DEVELOPMENT. I LEFT THE WHITE HOUSE WITH SO MANY BLESSINGS.....ALL ADJECTIVES USED ABOUT MY PROPOSALS WERE POSITIVE." HE FELT THAT THOSE POSITIVE WORDS HAD COME IMMEDIATELY AFTER HIS MENTION OF THE PLAN HE HAD FOR KEEPING ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS IN THE SINAI UNDER ISRAELI LEGAL AND SECURITY PROTECTION. HE CONCLUDED THIS PART OF THE DISCUSSION BY SAYING, "I WILL NOT BE REPETITIVE. LET IT BE AS IT IS."

6. I THEN ASKED DAYAN TO DISCUSS PROCEDURES FOR THE MEETING TOMORROW. BRIEFLY, WE WILL BEGIN A SHORT OPENING PUBLIC SESSION AT 1100 WITH FIVE MINUTE OPENING SPEECHES BY EACH OF THE THREE OF USE. AFTER PHOTOGRAPHS, WE WILL GO INTO CLOSED SESSION, IN WHICH THE ISRAELIS PLAN TO PUT FORWARD THEIR DRAFT DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES
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AND WE EXPECT THE EGYPTIANS TO FOLLOW SUIT. WHILE THERE IS STILL UNCERTAINTY ABOUT HOW TO PROCEED AFTER THAT, THE IDEA IS UNDER DISCUSSION OF FORMING WORKING GROUP TO PROVIDE DRAFTS OF THE DECLARATION AND POSSIBLY GUIDELINES ON A WEST BANK/GAZA AGREEMENT. THE ISRAELIS WILL SUBMIT THEIR "SELF-RULE" PROPOSAL AS THE BASIS FOR DEALING WITH THE WEST BANK/GAZA ISSUES, AND WILL RELY ON THE DRAFT THEY PRESENTED IN ISMAILIA FOR THE DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES. AT BEGIN'S OWN SUGGESTION, A THIRD WORKING GROUP WOULD BE SET UP TO DEAL WITH DRAFT TREATIES, WITH THE DRAFT RECEIVED LAST SEPTEMBER AS THE ISRAELI CONTRIBUTIONS, BUT THIS GROUP WOULD NOT BE EXPECTED TO PRODUCE RESULTS FOR SOME TIME BECAUSE OF THE COMPLICATED LEGAL ISSUES INVOLVED.

7. BEGIN'S DISTRACTION BY THE QUESTION OF MISUNDERSTANDINGS WAS TYPIFIED BY THE FACT THAT, ALMOST IN THE MIDDLE OF DAYAN'S PRESENTATION, HE CAME BACK TO THE SUBJECT TO POINT OUT THAT HE HAD "NEVER USED THE WORD ENDORSED" WITH REGARD TO OUR POSITION TOWARD HIS PROPOSALS, BUT THEY HAD BEEN CALLED "VERY REASONABLE" AND A "FAIR BASIS FOR NEGOTIATION."

8. WE THEN TURNED TO THE ISRAELI RATIONALE FOR WANTING TO MAINTAIN SETTLEMENTS IN THE SINAI. IN RESPONSE TO MY QUESTIONS, DAYAN EXPLAINED THE IMPORTANCE IN HIS VIEW OF ESTABLISHING AN ISRAELI-CONTROLLED BELT BETWEEN GAZA AND CONCENTRATIONS OF EGYPTIAN POPULATION IN THE SINAI AS A FORM OF BUFFER AGAINST THE INFILTRATION OF TERRORISTS INTO GAZA, AND THEN ON INTO ISRAEL. HE IS FIRMLY CONVINCED THAT THIS IS A NECESSARY COURSE, ALONG WITH THE ARRANGEMENTS IN THE SINAI FOR LIMITING MILITARY FORCES, FOR ENHANCING ISRAEL'S SECURITY. IF THIS IS NOT ACCEPTABLE TO EGYPT, ISRAEL WILL HAVE TO INSIST ON BORDER CHANGES. WE HAD SOME TENTATIVE DISCUSSIONS OF WHAT THE RELATIONSHIP OF THOSE SETTLEMENTS TO
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ISRAEL AND TO EGYPT MIGHT BE, AND I WILL PURSUE THIS SUBJECT IN GREATER DETAIL IN MY SUBSEQUENT CONVERSATIONS WITH DAYAN. HE DID RAISE ONE CAUTIONARY NOTE THAT, WHILE ISRAELI POLICY IS TO CONSTRUCT NO NEW SETTLEMENTS IN THE SINAI, THERE IS A PROBLEM ON THREE OR FOUR SETTLEMENTS ON WHICH CONSTRUCTION BEGAN UNDER THE PREVIOUS GOVERNMENT. THE IMPLICATION WAS THAT SOME OF THESE MIGHT BE BROUGHT TO COMPLETION AND COULD CREATE CONTROVERSY.

9. AS FOR OUR STRATEGY THROUGH THE POLITICAL COMMITTEE MEETINGS WEDNESDAY AND THURSDAY, I WILL HAVE TO WAIT UNTIL AFTER MY CONVERSATION WITH EGYPTIAN FOREIGN MINISTER KAMEL TUESDAY MORNING TO SEE WHAT MAY BE POSSIBLE. MY TENTATIVE THINKING IS TO SEE WHETHER WE CANNOT PUSH FOR A DRAFT DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES, AT LEAST WITH BRACKETED LANGUAGE, SO THAT WHEN I SEE SADAT ON FRIDAY I WILL BE ABLE TO GIVE HIM SOME MEASURE OF THE PROSPECTS FOR THESE TALKS. WORK ON THE GUIDELINES FOR NEGOTIATIONS RELATING TO THE WEST BANK AND GAZA WILL PROCEED MORE SLOWLY BECAUSE THE ISSUES ARE MUCH MORE DIFFICULT, BUT WE WILL SEE HOW FAR WE GET. SOME PROGRESS WILL PROBABLY BE NECESSARY IN ORDER TO HELP IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF GENERAL PRINCIPLES FOR THE DECLARATION. I WILL BE ABLE TO GIVE YOU A CLEARER SENSE TOMORROW EVENING OF HOW WE THINK THINGS WILL DEVELOP.

10. FROM WHAT THE ISRAELIS TELL ME, WHICH IS SUPPORTED BY OUR OWN INFORMATION, THE EGYPTIAN DELEGATION IS INFLEXIBLE AND UNIMAGINATIVE BY TEMPERMENT AND OPERATING UNDER A LIMITED MANDATE. I SUSPECT MUCH WILL DEPEND ON WHAT I AM ABLE TO REPORT TO SADAT FRIDAY, INCLUDING WHAT BEGIN MAY ASK ME TO CONVEY TO HIM DIRECTLY.
UNQUOTE CHRISTOPHER

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